CAPTAIN AMERICA'S WEIRD TALES

OCT. NO. 74

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I APPEAL TO *YOU*, MASTER JUDGE OF THE LOWER DEPTHS! I ADMIT WRONG IN HAVING MADE AN ENTRY IN THE FORBIDDEN BOOK... BUT WHAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN LETTERS OF FIRE CANNOT BE CHANGED! *IT IS YOUR OWN LAW!*

CAPTAIN AMERICA in "THE RED SKULL STRIKES AGAIN!"

6047

DOWN DEEP IN THE LOWER REGIONS, BEYOND THE GRAVE, A SINISTER CREATURE MAKES AN ENTRY IN A GREAT LEDGER...

I'VE WAITED LONG FOR THIS MOMENT, BUT IT HAS FINALLY ARRIVED! THE FATAL BOOK IS UNGUARDED! NOW I CAN ENTER THE NAME OF THE MAN I HATE MOST IN THE WORLD!

James Buchanan Barnes ... Capt. America

AS THE MESSENGER OF THE POWERS OF DARKNESS PREPARES FOR HIS JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING, HE SCANS THE LIST FOR THOSE WHOSE TIME HAS COME...

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE *HIS* NAME HERE!

... AND AS THE BELL TOWER STRIKES THE SOLEMN HOUR OF MIDNIGHT, CAPTAIN AMERICA PREPARES FOR BED...

GOSH, BUT I'M TIRED! I GUESS I'LL...

...NOW I WONDER WHO THAT COULD BE?

KNOCK! KNOCK!

THAT'S FUNNY-- I WAS POSITIVE I HEARD SOMEONE KNOCK!

THE TIME HAS COME, CAPTAIN AMERICA, FOR YOUR DEPARTURE! YOUR NAME HAS APPEARED IN THE GREAT VOLUME!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT MASQUERADE YOU'RE FROM, BUT I'LL SOON... HEY! I CAN'T MOVE!

YOUR EFFORTS TO RESIST ARE FUTILE -- THERE IS NO ESCAPE FOR THOSE WHOSE NAMES HAVE BEEN WRITTEN IN FIRE!

YOUR JOURNEY TO THE LOWER REGION IS AT HAND! ***DESCEND!***

I'M ***FALLING***... WHAT IN THE WORLD'S HAPPENING TO ME?

AFTER A FALL LIKE THAT I SHOULD HAVE BROKEN EVERY BONE IN MY BODY, BUT I GUESS I'M... HOLY SMOKE! THIS LOOKS LIKE DANTE'S INFERNO!

YOU HAVE HIT THE NAIL EXACTLY ON THE HEAD, CAPTAIN AMERICA!

WHO ARE ***YOU?***

I AM ***CHARON***, GUARDIAN OF THE RIVER ***STYX!*** COME, WE MUST BEGIN OUR JOURNEY AT ONCE -- THEY AWAIT YOUR ARRIVAL WITH GREAT EXPECTANCY!

DRAWN INTO THE BOAT BY A COMPELLING FORCE AGAINST WHICH ALL EFFORT PROVES USELESS, THE STRANGE CARGO IN ITS STRANGE VESSEL GLIDES SILENTLY THROUGH THE STYGIAN GLOOM...

THIS CAN'T BE TRUE! THOSE HANDS AND THOSE TORCHES... IT JUST CAN'T BE! IF THIS IS THE WORLD OF THE DEAD, WHAT AM I DOING HERE? I'M *ALIVE!*

THAT IS WHAT THEY ALL SAY WHEN THEY FIRST ARRIVE! I'VE HEARD IT SO OFTEN -- BUT YOU'LL GET USED TO THE THOUGHT -- IN TIME! QUIET NOW -- WE ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE CHAMBER WHERE THE POWER OF DARKNESS HOLDS COURT!

WELCOME, CAPTAIN AMERICA! *WELCOME!* YOUR BEING SENT HERE IS A SURPRISE -- BUT NONETHELESS GREATLY APPRECIATED! WE HAVE MADE *SPECIAL* PLANS FOR YOU!

I DON'T PRETEND TO KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT -- BUT I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS PLACE... AND I DON'T INTEND TO HANG AROUND!

HA! HA! HO! HO! OF THE THOUSANDS WHO HAVE COME THIS WAY, I MUST SAY YOU HAVE MORE SPUNK THAN MOST! WE SHALL TRULY ENJOY BREAKING YOUR FIERY SPIRIT!

A WORD WITH YOU, MASTER!

WHAT? A *MISTAKE? IMPOSSIBLE!* HIS NAME APPEARS IN FIERY LETTERS IN THE LEDGER! IT *CAN'T* BE!

MISTAKE OR NOT -- IT MAKES LITTLE DIFFERENCE NOW! THERE IS *NO* RETURN FROM THE LOWER REGIONS -- IT IS THE *LAW!*

SO IT'S YOU, RED SKULL! ONLY *YOU* WOULD REACH OUT FROM BEYOND THE DEAD TO SEEK REVENGE!

AND I *SHALL* HAVE MY REVENGE! IT WAS *I* WHO WROTE YOUR NAME IN THE VOLUME OF THE DEAD... AND NOW YOU ARE HERE AT LAST!

THAT CUTS NO ICE WITH ME -- I'VE BEATEN YOU BEFORE AND I'LL DO IT AGAIN! HERE OR *ANYWHERE* ELSE!

SILENCE! I REIGN HERE -- AND *I* ALONE SHALL DECIDE WHAT IS TO BE DONE!

I APPEAL TO *YOU*, MASTER JUDGE OF THE LOWER DEPTHS! I ADMIT WRONG IN HAVING MADE AN ENTRY IN THE FORBIDDEN BOOK... BUT WHAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN LETTERS OF FIRE CANNOT BE CHANGED! *IT IS YOUR OWN LAW!*

WHAT YOU SAY IS QUITE TRUE -- YET HE WHO *MAKES* THE LAW CAN ALSO *BREAK* IT! BOTH OF YOU SHALL HAVE YOUR CHANCE AT THAT WHICH YOU BOTH WANT *MOST*...

YOU, RED SKULL, SHALL HAVE YOUR CHANCE FOR *REVENGE*... AND *YOU*, CAPTAIN AMERICA, SHALL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EARN YOUR RIGHT TO RETURN TO THE LAND OF THE MORTALS!

THE TWO OF YOU SHALL LOCK IN COMBAT UNTIL ONE IS VANQUISHED! WHOEVER WINS SHALL HAVE WON HIS CHOICE! NOW THEN, PREPARE FOR BATTLE!!

NOW WE SHALL SEE WHO WILL BE THE VICTOR, CAPTAIN AMERICA! I HAVE PLANNED THIS MEETING FOR A LONG TIME -- AND I HAVE PLANNED *WELL!* YOU SHALL NOT WIN!

THAT'S SOMETHING YOU'LL HAVE TO PROVE!

QUICKLY, A BAND OF FIRE
TWO -- AND WITHIN THIS FIE
GLADIATORS OF LIGHT AND D
TO DO BATTL

YOUR PUNY EFFORTS WILL BE OF
HERE THE FORCES ARE ON *MY* SIDE!

THIS IS NO ORDINARY SCYTHE -- BUT THE ONE USED BY THE *GRIM REAPER* HIMSELF! ALL I NEED DO IS TOUCH YOU WITH IT, AND YOU'LL NEVER SEE THE LIGHT OF THE MORTAL WORLD AGAIN!!

YOU HAVEN'T TOUCHED ME *YET!*

SILENTLY THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES, AND INCH BY INCH THE RED SKULL FORCES THE VALIANT FIGHTER BACK...

YOU'LL FIND THE FLAMING PITS A COMFORTABLE RESTING PLACE FOR ALL ETERNITY, CAPTAIN AMERICA!

SUDDENLY!...

UNGES HEADLONG INTO THE
PTAIN AMERICA INSTINCT-
CHES FOR HIM...

AY!!!

R-R-R-I-P!

SLOWLY THE CIRCLE OF FLAME DWINDLES... AND AS A HUSHED SILENCE FALLS ACROSS THE ROCKY CHAMBER, CAPTAIN AMERICA SPEAKS OUT IN A CLEAR AND DEFIANT VOICE...

I HAVE WON THE BATTLE -- AND NOW I DEMAND MY RETURN TO THE WORLD OF MORTALS!

NO ONE, IN ALL ETERNITY, HAS EVER RETURNED FROM THE LOWER REGIONS! YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA, ARE THE FIRST AND THE LAST TO DO SO!

America

ASCEND, CAPTAIN AMERICA -- TO THE LAND OF MORTALS!

THE GLARE! MY EYES!

THE BLINDING LIGHT! IT MUST HAVE BEEN ALL A DREAM!... THE WHOLE THING!

BUT AS CAPTAIN AMERICA STARES DOWN AT HIS HAND, A LOOK OF DOUBT COMES INTO HIS EYES! FOR THERE, STILL TIGHTLY CLUTCHED BETWEEN HIS FINGERS, IS A BLOOD-RED PIECE OF RAGGED CLOTH!

THE END

"THE TOMB OF TERROR!"

5379

SLOWLY WE TRUDGED TOWARD CIVILIZATION WITH HEAVY HEARTS.. AND WITH A NIGHTMARISH MEMORY SEARED INDELIBLY INTO OUR SOULS.. A MEMORY WHICH TIME WILL NEVER DESTROY.

EGYPT! LAND OF ANCIENT LORE! THIS IS WHERE LEO AND RAE FOSTER, ARCHEOLOGISTS, WERE IN JULY OF 1932, EXPLORING THE TOMBS OF THE PHARAOHS, KINGS OF A LONG-DEAD DYNASTY...

SO FAR OUR MISSION HAS BEEN PRETTY SUCCESSFUL!

YES, WE HAVE QUITE A FEW CURIOS TO BRING BACK TO THE MUSEUM! NOW THEN, SAL-HAMIN! ...ABOUT THAT OTHER TOMB...

THE TOMB OF TUT-LAK-OMOR? I BEG OF YOU TO FORGET IT... LET EVIL REST! THAT IS NO PLACE FOR SUCH AS YOU!

SAL-HAMIN, HOW CAN YOU BE SO SUPERSTI-TIOUS! SURELY YOU DON'T BELIEVE WHOEVER GOES INTO THAT TOMB WILL BE CURSED?

YOU KNOW THE STORY AS WELL AS I DO.. TUT-LAK-OMOR WAS THE CRUELEST OF THE PHARAOHS! SO AWFUL WERE HIS CRIMES THAT WHEN HE DIED HIS VENGEFUL SUBJECTS THREW HIS BODY TO WILD BEASTS... WHO ATE IT! THAT IS... ALL BUT HIS ***HEART!*** IT WAS SO BLACK AND EVIL THAT EVEN THEY WOULD NOT TOUCH IT! THIS BLACK HEART WAS THE ONLY PART OF HIM THAT WAS PLACED IN HIS TOMB! SINCE THEN NO ONE WOULD DARE ENTER THE RESTING PLACE OF ALL THAT REMAINS OF THE MONSTER!

THAT STORY ONLY INTRIGUES US THE MORE! WE MUST GET THAT HEART!

SIR, PLEASE! YOU ARE MY GOOD FRIENDS AND I WOULD SACRIFICE MY LIFE TO KEEP YOU FROM THE TOMB! BETTER TO LET EVIL REST AND NOT DISTURB IT--THE CONSEQUENCES WOULD BE AWFUL! ***DO NOT DISTURB THE TOMB OF TUT-LAK-OMOR!***

VERY WELL, SAL-HAMIN! I SEE YOU'RE DEADLY SERIOUS ABOUT THIS! WE WILL NOT GO!

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! AND NOW... IT IS LATE! IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I SHALL RETIRE!

AFTER SAL-HAMIN HAD LEFT...

LEO, CERTAINLY YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT GOBLIN AND GHOST TALE?

OF COURSE NOT, RAE! BUT THE POOR BOY WAS SO GRIM ABOUT IT ALL! YES, WE'LL GO TO THE TOMB AS SOON AS HE'S ASLEEP AND GET THE BLACK HEART OF TUT-LAK-OMOR!

THE TWO AMERICANS WERE STAYING AT SAL-HAMIN'S HOME AT THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE... TWO HOURS LATER, THEY STOLE OUT AND MADE THEIR WAY TO THE TOMB...

HURRY, LEO!

THERE! IT'S OPEN! WE CAN GO IN NOW!

UNDISTURBED FOR UNTOLD CENTURIES, THE GRIM TOMB OF THE CRUEL EGYPTIAN KING WAS DANK WITH ANCIENT DEATH! THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FOSTERS ECHOED HOLLOWLY WHERE NO MAN HAD BEEN SINCE BEFORE THE PYRAMIDS!

WHAT A PLACE--A SANCTUARY OF EVIL! THE HEART! THERE IT IS, IN THAT BOX!

GET IT, LEO! GET IT AND LET'S GET OUT OF HERE--THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS!

WHEN THEY GOT BACK TO THEIR ROOM...

THIS IS PRICELESS, RAE! LOOK! THE BOX IS TIGHTLY SEALED! WE WON'T OPEN IT UNTIL WE GET TO OUR LABORATORY BACK IN THE STATES! MEANWHILE, WE MUST NOT LET SAL-HAMIN KNOW WE HAVE IT!

ALL RIGHT, BUT LET'S GO TO SLEEP NOW... THIS WHOLE BUSINESS HAS UPSET ME SOMEHOW!

LEO FOSTER PLACED THE BOX CONTAINING THE HEART ON A TABLE NEAR HIS BED... THEN HE AND HIS WIFE FELL INTO A DEEP SLUMBER WHILE THE HEART OF TUT-LAK-OMOR, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THOUSANDS OF YEARS, WAS ONCE MORE AMONG THE LIVING!

AN HOUR LATER, LEO STIRRED IN HIS SLEEP..SOMETHING HAD DISTURBED HIM!

THAT THUMPING! WHAT IS IT?

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

THE SOUND GREW LOUDER AND LOUDER! HE OPENED HIS EYES!

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

WHAT?! ...IS SOMEONE HAMMERING AT THIS HOUR?

THE NOISE INCREASED, GREW LOUDER AND LOUDER!

THUMP!

THUMP!

IT'S...IN THIS ROOM! RAE! WAKE UP!

BOTH OF THEM WERE AWAKE NOW AND SITTING UP IN BED... AS THE FURIOUS THUMPING SWELLED UNTIL IT FILLED THE ROOM LIKE THE VIOLENT, UNRESTRAINED STRIKING OF A SLEDGE-HAMMER!

IT'S COMING FROM THE BOX OF THE BLACK HEART!

GREAT HEAVENS...THAT NOISE—IT'S THUNDEROUS!

THUMP! THUMP!

THEN THE THUMPING STOPPED SUDDENLY! THEY JUMPED UP TO LOOK AT THE BOX! THE LID WAS OPEN AND...

IT'S GONE! LEO! THE HEART IS GONE!

LISTEN TO THAT THUMPING AGAIN! FROM THE OUTSIDE, THIS TIME!

AFRAID OF WHAT THEY MIGHT SEE, THE COUPLE DASHED TO THE WINDOW! THERE, IN THE BLACK OF NIGHT, THEY SAW...

IT'S SAL-HAMIN! THE SOUND IS COMING FROM HIM!

SAL-HAMIN! WAIT! COME BACK!

THUMP!

THUMP!

BUT WHEN SAL-HAMIN TURNED TO FACE THEM, HE WAS NO LONGER THE CHARMING PERSON HE HAD BEEN! INSTEAD...

SAL-HAMIN! WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOUR FACE...IT'S NOT THE SAME!

SAL-HAMIN? WHO IS SAL-HAMIN? I AM TUT-LAK-OMOR!

THUMP! THUMP!

AT LAST! AFTER THOUSANDS OF CENTURIES I HAVE COME BACK! NOW I CAN FINISH WHAT I COULD NOT DO WHEN I DIED! I CAN KILL... I CAN DESTROY... I AM THE BLACK PHARAOH!

SAL-HAMIN! NO! A TERRIBLE THING HAS HAPPENED TO YOU! THE BLACK HEART OF TUT-LAK-OMOR HAS POSSESSED YOU! YOU ARE NOT...

WITH A VICIOUS BLOW, SAL-HAMIN KNOCKED THE COUPLE SENSELESS!

OUT OF MY WAY! I HAVE MANY THINGS TO DO THIS NIGHT!

ON WENT SAL-HAMIN AND NOTHING COULD STOP HIM! HIS STRENGTH WAS THAT OF TEN MEN AND HE LEFT DESTRUCTION AND TERROR IN HIS WAKE!

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

FOR A LONG TIME LEO AND RAE WERE UNCONSCIOUS! THEN THEY CAME TO...

RAE! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

YES! OH, LEO, WHAT HAVE WE DONE? SAL-HAMIN WAS RIGHT.. THE BLACK HEART WAS CURSED!

YES! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, BUT TUT-LAK-OMOR'S HEART IS STILL ALIVE! SOMEHOW IT GOT INTO THE BODY OF SAL-HAMIN, GIVING HIM IT'S STRENGTH AND ITS HATE!

OH, THIS IS AWFUL! LISTEN..

FROM THE VILLAGE CAME SCREAMS OF PAIN AND HORROR! AND ABOVE ALL, THE MOST AWFUL SOUND -- THE BEATING OF THE BLACK HEART!

HE'S ON A RAMPAGE! HE'S BENT ON DESTROYING THE DESCENDANTS OF THOSE WHO FED HIS BODY TO WILD BEASTS!

IT'S OUR FAULT! AND WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!

THUMP! THUMP!

HELP! HELP!

IN THE VILLAGE THEY FOUND AMPLE EVIDENCE OF TUT-LAK-OMOR'S WRATH! DESTRUCTION WAS EVERYWHERE!

BUILDINGS TORN DOWN! PEOPLE MAIMED!

WHERE IS HE? WE'VE GOT TO FIND HIM AND STOP HIM!

LISTEN!

THE BEATING-- IT'S BEYOND THAT WALL!

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

THUMP! THUMP!

SAL-HAMIN!

STOP! STOP!

WITHOUT A WORD, SAL-HAMIN FLUNG LEO ASIDE AND SWEPT RAE UP IN HIS ARMS!

DON'T! SAL-HAMIN! LISTEN...PLEASE!

SLAP

THUMP! THUMP!

HELP!

WALKING WITH THE TREAD OF DOOM, SAL-HAMIN CARRIED RAE ACROSS THE RUBBLE OF DESTRUCTION...

THE TOMB! HE'S TAKING RAE TO THE TOMB!

HELP! HELP! LEO! HELP ME!

THUMP! THUMP! THUMP!

I CAN'T STOP HIM! HE'S TOO STRONG! BUT THERE IS A CHANCE...JUST ONE! IF THAT DOESN'T WORK...

LEO RAN BACK TO HIS ROOM IN A RACE WITH DEATH! THERE HE GOT THE BOX THAT HAD CONTAINED THE BLACK HEART!

NOW...IF I CAN GET TO THE TOMB BEFORE HE DOES!

THERE! I MADE IT!..AND... HERE HE COMES!

THUMP! THUMP!

HALT, SAL-HAMIN!

WHO ARE YOU TO HALT THE PHARAOH OF TUT-LAK-OMOR? I SHALL DESTROY YOU AS I DID THE OTHERS!

THUMP!

THUMP!

I DO NOT BELIEVE YOU ARE TUT-LAK-OMOR! YOU ARE REALLY SAL-HAMIN AND YOU ARE USING THIS AS AN EXCUSE TO BE VICIOUS! *YOU* ARE THE CRUEL ONE, SAL-HAMIN! IT IS RIDICULOUS TO THINK THAT THE HEART OF THE PHARAOH IS IN YOU!

ME, SAL-HAMIN? NO! IT IS ONLY MY HEART THAT IS IN HIM... HE IS NOT CAPABLE OF SUCH CRUELTIES AS I AM!

THUMP

THUMP

I STILL DO NOT BELIEVE THAT A HEART WAS EVER IN THIS BOX!

NO? I SHALL SHOW YOU! I SHALL PROVE IT!

THUMP!

SUDDENLY THE BOX THAT LEO HELD OPEN WAS FILLED WITH THE FURIOUS THUMPING OF THE HEART!

OHHHHH...

THUMP!

THUMP!

IN A FLASH LEO CLOSED THE BOX AND HURLED IT INTO THE TOMB!

THUMP!

THUMP!

THUMP!

BUT, LEO--LOOK! SAL-HAMIN! HE'S DEAD! HIS BODY COULDN'T STAND THE SHOCK! OH, LEO... IT'S OUR FAULT... *WE KILLED HIM!*

SLOWLY WE TRUDGED TOWARD CIVILIZATION WITH HEAVY HEARTS... AND WITH A NIGHTMARISH MEMORY SEARED INDELIBLY INTO OUR SOULS... A MEMORY WHICH TIME WILL NEVER DESTROY!

THE END